

MATSUI TAKES OATH OF OFFICE

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March 10, 2005

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WASHINGTON, DC â€“ Doris Matsui was sworn in as the Member of Congress for Californiaâ€™s Fifth District in a ceremony on the floor of the House of Representatives this morning. She fills the vacancy created by the passing of her husband, the late Honorable Robert T. Matsui. She made the following remarks on the House floor:

â€œSpeaker Hastert, Leader Pelosi, Chairman Lewis and Mr. Stark, thank you very much and all the distinguished Members and friends here for welcoming me here today.

"As I look around this chamber, I see so many of you who have been my friends throughout these years. And now, today, I have the honor of calling you my colleagues. The last time I was here in this chamber was December twenty-third. Obviously the House was out of session then. But Bob was so excited because he was going to bring Anna on the floor to witness his swearing in for his fourteenth term.

"So that morning of the twenty-third, we decided to do a practice run. And we brought Anna here on the floor of this awe-inspiring chamber to get her used to it. After that, we went back to his office and we just happen to take a picture of Anna sitting on her grandfatherâ€™s lap, behind the desk, with the Capitol behind. The next day Bob fell ill, and was hospitalized. And he tried so hard to get well because he wanted to be here with his colleagues and with Anna. As you all know, he loved this body.

"He loved coming to work here and he loved all of you. But he didnâ€™t win that battle. In the days since, Iâ€™ve spent a lot of time talking with the people of Sacramento, and Iâ€™ve come to appreciate even more what Bob maintained all along: that his commitment to equality that his dedication to ensuring dignity to the elderly his work to make Sacramento even a better place to live and work and to raise a family and his driving desire to make America stronger for each successive generation.

"Those things werenâ€™t about him at all. They were about us. They were about our future. And so, as Iâ€™ve taken this oath today, with a heart both heavy and hopeful, that we can all work together to build that better future. The challenges facing the people of Sacramento did not end with my husbandâ€™s service. I know that Bob made all of you aware, in some cases painfully aware, how important the issue of flood control is to Sacramento.

"For many, many years, a couple of decades, my husband bent your ears on that. You wonâ€™t be surprised to hear that that pain in your ear is not going to go away until we get it done. This is truly the peopleâ€™s House, and thatâ€™s why Bob loved it so. And I realized as I was talking and listening to the people of Sacramento, how important it is to connect with the people. As I was talking with them in the grocery stores and the coffee shops, at the service stations, I heard from many people. Bobâ€™s high school teacher came up to me one day and said, â€“Doris, please, please, make sure that Social

Security is secure.â€™™

"I ran into a young mother at the grocery store, who stopped me as I was picking up a can of peas, and said, â€™Mrs. Matsui, I lost my husband a year ago, and I need those Social Security benefits for my son and myself.â€™™ When I was in a coffee shop, a young man rolled over to me and said, â€™Mrs. Matsui, I really need these disability benefits because I donâ€™™t want to have to depend on my parents.â€™™

"I talked to the hardware store owner, and I listened really hard, because he wants to provide health care benefits for his employees, but finds it to be very difficult. You know, Social Security, health care, the war in Iraq: these are all local issues. We happen to talk about them here, but theyâ€™™re all local issues. And on these issues, and so many more, I look forward to working with all of you to find common ground and achieve common good.

"I mentioned earlier the photo of Anna sitting on her grandfatherâ€™™s lap. Well one of our other family treasures is a photo of Brian, here, at age six, witnessing his fatherâ€™™s first swearing-in. And he sat right there. Heâ€™™s sitting there now. Heâ€™™s sitting there with his own daughter, Anna. Seeing him there, and seeing Anna is a reminder that despite tragedy and heartbreak, life indeed does go on. And I know that somewhere, Bob is looking down and smiling, knowing that Anna was here on the floor, having watched her grandmother being sworn in. Life does go on.

"And so, it is with Bobâ€™™s example, and Annaâ€™™s inspiration of future generations, and with the hopes and dreams of the people of Sacramento, I take this honor, and I have taken this oath, to join you today as a colleague. And I truly, truly appreciate being here.<

"Thank you very much."
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